DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 077 278 FL 003 973

AUTHOR	Stansfield, Charles W.
TITLE	English Teaching and the Economic Development of Colombia.
PUB DATE	4 Aug 71
NOTE	8p.; Speech delivered to the Committee on Education of the Sixth Congress of the Florida-Colombia Alliance, Ibague, Colombia, August 4, 1971
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Applied Linguistics; Developing Nations; *Economic Development; Educational Improvement; *Educational Needs; *English (Second Language); Foreign Students; International Education; Language Development; Language Proficiency; Language Role; *Language Skills; Second Language Learning; Study Abroad; *Teacher Education; Teacher Exchange Programs; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Colombia; Colombian American Linguistic Institute; Florida Colombia Alliance

ABSTRACT

To supply the large number of workers qualified for complex jobs, a demand created by the growing needs of a rapidly growing population, Colombia must make provisions for an expanded system of higher education. This can be accomplished by sending students abroad to study at the university level. The large number of students coming to the United States to study requires adequate training in English-language skills before they leave Colombia. The Colombian-American Linguistic Institute (ILCA) was created to improve the development of these skills through the creation of textbooks and the retraining of English teachers. Lack of continued financial support reduces the work of the Institute and creates the need for help from other sources. The state of Florida has been quite active in the teaching of English as a foreign language; and the Florida-Colombia Alliance, an organization sponsoring scholarships for Colombian students studying at Florida colleges and universities, should work to have the state university system of Florida use its resources to help with the work of the ILCA. (VM)

ED 077278

Charles W. Stansfield
Assistant Professor
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado 80302

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ENGLISH TEACHING AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF COLOMBIA

A speech delivered on August 4, 1971, to the Committee on Education of the Sixth Congress of the Florida-Colombia Alliance in Ibagué, Colombia.

FL003 973

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ENGLISH TEACHING AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF COLOMBIA

Traditionally Latin-American countries have depended on foreign institutions of higher learning to handle their advanced educational needs. Prior to this century it was customary for the young aristocrat to journey to Europe where he acquired not only his degree, but European culture and values as well. Due to the challenge of a technological age, however, an increasing interest developed in study in the United States after World War II. Since the opening in 1952 of the Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior, or ICETEX, as it is generally called, the number of Colombian students helped by their governments to study abroad has grown to around five thousand a year. Some 42% of these elect to come to the United States where excellent opportunities exist for advanced technical training in all fields in addition to the courses in law, medicine, and civil engineering which traditionally have been well covered by Colombian universities.

The population explosion in Colombia is indeed alarming. The birth rate in Bogotá is 33.8 per thousand as compared to a death rate of 19.6. Other cities such as Medellín, have an even larger birth rate and half the country's population is under 15 years of age. Thus it can be concluded that the majority of the country's population will contribute little to the production of goods for some time to come.

Gale has estimated that by 1975 the South American continent will have to increase eighteen times the internal production of machinery.[1] The technology

---

[1] Laurance Gale, Education and Development in Latin America (New York: Frederick A. Preager, 1969), p. 45.

involved will demand a large number of workers qualified for complex jobs. A study done by ICETEX in 1964 showed that by 1975 Colombia will need 141,000 additional high level personnel, while the most optimistic prediction about university growth anticipates space for only 111,000 in the interim. This figure includes those who will enroll, but not graduate.[2]

Doctor Diógenes Arosemena, Director of Panama's Institute for the Formation and Utilizacion of Human Resources, feels that there are only two methods through which developing countries can meet their manpower needs:

1. By obtaining professors and technicians from abroad, and
2. By sending their students abroad.[3]

The first of these methods has been used extensively in the past decade in Colombia and has been found to suffer from several disadvantages. It is very difficult to get persons of known expertise to live in underdeveloped countries. If they can be obtained, the language barrier is often an insurmountable problem both to them and to the foreign nationals who could profit from their knowledge. Finally, the cost of bringing such people to Colombia is extremely high in comparison with the average remuneration for local labor. For all of these reasons the Fulbright Commission, in Bogotá after a decade of frustration, all but ceased to include the use of this strategy, after 1968, in their annual proposal to Washington, choosing instead the second alternative; sending Colombian students to the United States. Doctor German García Restrepo, Executive Director of the Commission in Colombia, feels that this strategy has

---

[2] ICETEX, Recursos y Requerimientos de Personal de Alto Nivel, (Bogotá : ICETEX, 1964), pp. 146-147.

[3] Diógenes Arosemena, "Desarrollo de los Recursos Humanos a Través del Intercambio Educativo," in El Crédito Educativo en América Latina, edited by ICETEX (Bogotá : Imprenta Nacional, 1969), p. 247.

worked much better and has the following advantages.

1. The cost per grantee is cheaper.
2. Returning grantees can then give seminars to Colombians with no resulting communication problems.
3. Unlike the American grantee who is only here for one year, the returning Colombian is here for good (except for the 2.2% who chose to remain abroad).[4]

Given therefore, that foreign training will continue to play a major role in the development of human and technological resources, so necessary for a dynamic economy, the role of English teaching in Colombia becomes one of major importance.

The Colombian student going to the United States with six years of English study at the secondary level must be able to function at ease in the English language.[5] UNESCO's trilingual handbook, Study Abroad, states that the greatest cause of failure among international students is their inability to understand and express themselves in the foreign language. The case of Colombia is typical, my own observations have revealed that often graduates are unable to exchange even everyday banalities as reward for their efforts in the English class. Those wishing to study abroad must have the funds necessary to take private lessons from a tutor, or enroll in a commercial English teaching establishment. Yet a six year sequence is compulsory for fulfillment of the requirements for the bachillerato.

---

[4] El Crédito Educativo en Colombia (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1970), p. 36.

[5] ICETEX, in Observaciones Generales sobre la Enseñanza en los Estados Unidos, (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1966), p. 12, states, "Experience indicates, without any doubt, that the major problem which the foreign student will encounter in the United States, is the lack of a sufficient knowledge of English,"

According to Professor Brooks of Yale University, this is sufficient exposure to lead to a functional mastery of the four basic communicative skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.[6]

The Florida-Colombia Alliance has provided scholarships for over 250 Colombian students to study at Florida colleges and universities. The English proficiency of these students, upon arriving in the U.S., was usually so low that it was necessary to create the Florida Interamerican Learning Institute (FILI) to prepare them for entrance in the States junior colleges. Having spoken with many FILI professors, I know that they are often perplexed by the thought that their students had taken six years of English before enrolling in the school. Many of them, including the students themselves, ask "What good did it do?" A Colombian friend of mine, who works as an educational advisor to the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, jokingly says that the English he learned in school served him perfectly well, as far north as Barranquilla.

It should be noted that English is important to the Colombian student, even if he does not get the opportunity to study abroad. Although an attempt is presently being made to change the situation, very few textbooks exist in the Spanish language for the study of mathematics and the natural sciences at the university level. Consequently, most up to date Colombian professors adopt textbooks written in English which are sold in this country by U.S. companies or their Colombian agents. Here again the student's high school preparation fails him, making it impossible for him to read his assignments with comprehension.

---

[6] Nelson Brooks, Language and Language Learning (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964).

At the 1968 meeting of the Colombian Association of English Teachers, the rector of the University of Valle, in Cali, criticized the group for placing emphasis on improving the student's oral skills, when the reading skill would be of greatest necessity to most. He further cited that the inability to read English is one of the most frequently stated complaints of Colombian university professors when discussing the value of the high school preparation of their students.[7]

In an effort to remedy this situation the Department of State created, in 1962, the Colombian-American Linguistic Institute (ILCA). The Institute under the direction of Dr. John W. Martin of the University of California at Los Angeles, received a three year grant to develop a series of textbooks and teachers' manuals based on the latest developments in linguistics and methodological theory. To assist in the writing of these textbooks and in the retraining of Colombian teachers in their use, the Fulbright Commission assigned two American professors as lecturers to ILCA each year until 1968. Following that year, professors were no longer assigned due to a cutback in funds and an increasing number of requests for aid to other areas of education, particularly at the university level. Also, it was felt that with the textbooks and teachers' manuals now completed, the Colombian government could continue the institute without outside help.[8]

---

[7] Alfonso Ocampo Londoño, "Opening Address", Bulletin of the Third National ASOCOPI Seminar (Cali: ASOCOPI, 1968), p. 3.

[8] Germán García Restrepo, private tape recorded interview with the Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia, July 6, 1971.

This ideal, however, was not realized, due to the lack of funds appropiated to the Ministry of Education and ILCA's parent organization, the Colombian Pedagogical Institute. Consequently, ILCA currently has only four staff members who are responsible for the retraining of some 100 teachers each year.

Requests for the establishment of ILCA extension courses have come from several cities of Colombia and particularly from Cali, where the local English teachers' association has 450 active members.

There can be no doubt that ILCA could reach many more teachers if it had additional staff. How can organizations such as ILCA be assisted? The Committee on Educational Interchange Policy, in their efforts to better the underdeveloped nations, has stated,

> "Programs to train teachers of English as a foreign language should be greatly expanded, both in the United States and abroad. Universities, foundations, and the U.S. Government should re-examine their work in this area to determine how they can intensify their current efforts."[9]

The State of Florida has long been actful in the teaching of English as a foreign language due to its sizeable immigrant population. The Miami area in particular, enjoys a national reputation as a result of its innovations and successes in the field of bilingual education. In addition, several of our state universities have departments of foreign language education and programs in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Professors in these departments who possess a fluent knowledge of Spanish, would be more than capable of offering the type of assistance ILCA needs.

---

[9] Committee on Educational Interchange Policy, A Foreign Student Program for the Developing Countries during the Coming Decade. New York; Institute of International Education, 1962), p. 23.

Therefore, I am suggesting, that the Florida Colombia Alliance work to secure that the state university system of Florida use its resources to send to Colombia at least one specialist per year to assist in the retraining of English teachers and that said person be assigned directly to the Colombian-American Linguistic Institute.

The benefits to be derived from such a program are indeed numerous. It should be noted that Dr. Albert Marckwardt of Princeton University, and Dr. W.R. Lee of the British Council, both of whom are considered experts of the subject of English teaching abroad, have stated in writing their praise of the Institute's program.[10] A Florida university professor could not only contribute to the ILCA staff but would profit from his association with them as well. As a consequence new ideas and techniques of English teaching would make a greater entry into this country where so many teachers are totally lacking of professional preparation.

The final result, which is the purpose of this paper, and indeed the purpose of this committee of the Florida-Colombia Alliance, would be a contribution toward an improved Colombia where vertical assention of the less favored, through education, would become an economic reality.

Charles W. Stansfield

---

[10] See Dr. Markwardt's report to the Fulbright Commission of February 24, 1968. In March, 1971, Dr. Lee made a three week study of teacher preparation programs in Colombia for Mr. Paul Gotch of the British Council. Although the report is not available for public use, Mr. Gotch has stated to me that ILCA was found to have the best teacher training program in the nation.